Realism’s Empire
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If one wished to put it drastically, one could say that your study is located at the crossroads of magic and positivism. That spot is bewitched.

—Theodor Adorno, letter to Walter Benjamin

This book is premised on the observation that pivotal works by some prominent European novelists in the nineteenth century are structured around figures imported from the margins of their world. The new and central positioning of the foreign within the domestic occasions a variety of consequences for the narrative, its construction of space, and its reflection and production of a particular historical moment. Honoré de Balzac’s Magic Skin in *La Peau de chagrin* (1831); the Chinese Mandarin of *Le Père Goriot* (1835); the colonial woman of *La Fille aux yeux d’or* (1835); Anthony Trollope’s various Irish Members in *Phineas Finn* (1869) and *Phineas Redux* (1874); the provocative foreigners of *The Way We Live Now* (1875); Theodor Fontane’s itinerant Scot in *Cécile* (1887); and the Chinese ghost that Fontane called the center of his masterpiece, *Effi Briest* (1895), all originate or represent origins well outside of Balzac’s Paris, Trollope’s London, and Fontane’s Berlin. Once they inhabit the domestic space of these novels, though—a fact which in itself testifies to an important cultural shift and a new mobility—they have profound effects on both space and the novel. This is a study of those effects, their historical contexts, and their possible consequences for our understanding of realism.

A brief examination of the history of foreign incursions into European space in prose fiction and nonfiction must quickly acknowledge that such entries are far from unique to the nineteenth century. In what many allege to be the first western novel,1 *Cervantes’s Don Quijote de la Mancha*

1. For just a few contrasting recent views on this, see, for example, Michael McKeon’s *The Origins of the English Novel* (273–94), which begins its discussion of novels with the *Quijote*,

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(1605/1615), Spain is already posited as a site of Mediterranean mixture; characters from Spain and North Africa come and go freely or against their will in a manner that reflects the close and contentious historical relationship between those regions. What happens in the nineteenth century differs in important ways, however. Even if novels of that period owe some of their most deep-seated narrative strategies and generic allegiances to Cervantes and to the larger history of the genre, the importation of foreign figures in these later works emphasizes the astonishing and new complexity that novelists of the period saw in the world they tried to record. The distinctiveness of such figures in the works of Balzac, Trollope, Fontane, and others can best be understood when placed in the general historical and cultural context of imperialism, especially at the appearance of what has become known as globalization. Recent scholarly attention to and theorizations of imperial space have failed to fully account for its vexed reproduction in the form of prose fiction—substantial disagreements between major critics like Franco Moretti and Edward Said only emphasize this—and the attendant complications are usually glossed over in the history of the novel as a genre. Part of what makes the use of foreign figures in narratives of the nineteenth century so particular is that it corresponds to the onset of an era of literary realism in which writers like Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane all implicated their works. Because understandings of realism are central not just to the authors in question and to their narrative projects but also to some of the most prominent theorists of empire and novelistic space (e.g., Edward Said), it is vital that we reevaluate the relationship between literary realism and the tension between empiricism and enchantment inherent in nineteenth-century understandings of the imperial project. Yet, while commonly accepted ideas of realism can abet the analysis of the novels discussed below, the texts themselves often challenge the most conventional definitions of literary realism as a narrative mode or literary-historical era. In works that explicitly and implicitly debate, perform, or sponsor aims judged by many critics to be “realist” ones, Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane tether the concerns of their narrative form to the historical shifts which their novels witness: the disenchantment of the world through scientific explanation and imperial exploration; the mixture of disparate people and things wrought by the broad pursuits of science and empire; and the construction of the city as a prime site for the portrayal and complication of such mixture. As these shifts all create significant problems

slightly revising Ian Watt, who treats Cervantes’ novel rather as a “myth” alongside Faust and Don Juan and views Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe (1719) as the first of its genre (Watt 85). Margaret Doody, at the other end of the spectrum, begins with what she calls “The Ancient Novel” and traces the genre back to Chariton, Xenophon, Heliodorus, and Petronius, around and just after the beginning of the Common Era (Doody 13–172).
for the very novels depicting them, Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane simultaneously articulate the possibilities and try the limitations of a nascent narrative mode that ultimately pervades the fictions of the nineteenth century.

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This book is dedicated to my family, for their never-ending support; to my fearless and patient teachers in the California public schools, from Gladys Blalock in sixth grade to Doris Lang in twelfth; and to the memory of Douglas Lee Kratz.
At the close of Montaigne’s “Des cannibales,” published in his Essais in 1581, the New World arrives in the Old one. Three Native Americans, the narrator tells us, “were at Rouen, at the time that King Charles IX was there. The King spoke to them for a long time; they were shown our fashion, our pomp, the style of a proper city. After that, somebody asked them their opinion” (1.263). The natives respond with commonsensical critiques of royalism and social inequality in Europe, bold addenda to the text’s earlier denigration of Catholicism and corruption. This ending is marked partly by humor, but it serves more importantly to concretize, as critiques supposedly launched on French soil, the essay’s more allusive and trans-Atlantic earlier comparisons of society in Europe and in the Americas. Contrast, with this image of Montaigne’s, the remarkable closing pages of Daniel Defoe’s novel, Robinson Crusoe (1719). Having returned to Europe with the novel’s title character, the island native Friday takes center stage in an apparently gratuitous episode which the narrator introduces thus: “Never was a fight managed so hardily, and in such a surprizing manner, as that which followed between Friday and the bear, which gave us all (though at first we were surprized and afraid for

1. For all quotations not originally in English, page numbers refer to the original-language editions cited. Where other translations have been consulted, they have usually been substantially modified but are also listed in the works cited.
him) the greatest diversion imaginable” (287). Montaigne’s and Defoe’s texts are similarly built on the cultural difference between the domestic and the foreign, but they employ this difference to radically incongruous ends: Montaigne to the critique of French culture and its excesses, and Defoe to the “greatest diversion imaginable,” an episode that is out of place in both the structure and tone of *Robinson Crusoe*.

The difference here is as important as the parity. Montesquieu, one of Defoe’s contemporaries, later meshes the two aims of diversion and critique, using humor derived from radical cultural difference to leaven a broadside at his own society in the *Lettres persanes* (1721), a series of letters offering comical but critical Persian perspectives on France. Tracing the development within the French tradition offers a view of how this device changes over the next century, up to the beginning of Balzac’s career as a novelist. As the eighteenth century progresses toward the apex of Enlightenment in form of the *Encyclopédie* (1751–80) a pattern appears to emerge in a slow reduction of humor and a continual amplification of the text’s design as social critique. Madame de Graffigny’s *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* (1747), modeled on Montesquieu’s epistolary work, performs a similar critique while adopting a much more serious tone, as does Voltaire’s *L’Ingénu* (1767), one of his least comical shorter prose works. Like Montaigne’s essay, *L’Ingénu* brings a Native American to France, but Voltaire’s version of this crossing begins to address the difficulties of assimilation, placing equal emphasis on the character of the immigrant and the culture in which that immigrant settles. By the time Claire de Duras writes *Ourika* (1826), in which a Senegalese woman struggles unsuccessfully to find acceptance in a Parisian culture that pretends to cherish ideals of enlightened racial tolerance, the narrative fate of the foreigner in Europe appears essentially tragic. These earlier works rely consistently on an imaginable and preservable distance between the Old World and the New World, a distance both geographical and cultural. Geared as these texts are toward a symbolic instrumentalization of the foreigner within a larger ideological attack on Europe, the portrayal of the foreign arrivals to Europe often positions them as possessors of virtue and commonsensical reason that are lacking in the cultures of their colonizers. As the condition of possibility for the value of foreignness on which the critiques rely, distance—relations of space—remains uncontested in these works. The nineteenth-century works by Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane discussed below can also be situated within this tradition, in the sense that they likewise deploy foreign figures and characters. However, because their deployment adopts a fundamentally different narrative form, and because it seems motivated by narrative needs that vary from author to author, it must be seen as a momentous shift within that tradition. This tradition itself is not the primary aim of this study, but it reveals the
thematic terrain on which the authors examined chose to engage their changing world. Through an investigation of the relationship between the use of foreign figures in the nineteenth-century novel and the effect of these figures on the novels’ articulation of space (and especially urban space), diminishing distance, and the authors’ particular method of realism, we can begin to sketch the impact this shift has on the form of the novel.

The nineteenth-century evocations of the foreigner-in-Europe motif begin in the metropolis, which had already begun, in the years leading up to Balzac’s first novels, enjoying a certain privileged position in the construction of narrative. In Franco Moretti’s *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900*, for example, a handy map represents graphically the location of major “narrative complications” in six Jane Austen novels. The largest concentration of these “complications” is in London, where, according to Moretti, all but one of the novels sees its course change sharply. This should perhaps be surprising, given the associations that usually spring to mind when one considers the typical locale of an Austen novel; London is not her primary domain. Moretti himself, though, is not surprised by the density of complication in London, ascribing it quickly to the idea that it is “the busiest city in the world” (18). Because this is Moretti’s introduction to what will become a critique of Edward Said’s reading of the narrative space of Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, it merits a closer look. If Said and Moretti are both grappling with the relationship of national domestic center and colonial periphery to the structure and narrative demands of the nineteenth-century novel in and beyond Austen, then the idea of the city is crucial here, in ways that Said’s important contributions never elevate to the level of a central concern. The city can be said to serve as, simultaneously, the locus of a domesticity and reason that counter the novels’ “irrational” colonial energies, and as the site where these energies infiltrate and come to complicate even nonurban novels like those of Austen. The opposition between Said’s and Moretti’s differing approaches to the ordering of novelistic space provides valuable context for one of the elemental issues in my argument: the avowal, within certain novels of the nineteenth century, of the disappearance of regions of mystery and romance due to cartographical and general scientific advancements. Pivotal moments in the work of Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane illustrate the crucial role that remappings or unmappings of narrative space play in the development and complication of novels that have been implicated in (or that implicate themselves in) the project of literary realism.

As attempts to organize space coherently, realist narrative and the activity of empire-building can be partnered, to a degree. Said certainly sees them as close relatives, since they both arise from what he calls “imaginative geography,” the capacity to envision the commanding and ordering of raw space
(Orientalism 71). In both Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism, Said is careful to situate physical space as the base around which all other concerns organize: “Underlying social spaces are territories, lands, geographical domains, the actual geographical underpinnings of the imperial, and also the cultural contest. To think about distant places, to colonize them, to populate or depopulate them: all of this occurs on, about, or because of land” (Culture 78). This “geographical notation, the theoretical mapping and charting of territory that underlies Western fiction, historical writing, and philosophical discourse,” thus opens the possibility of the physical act of colonization (58; emphasis in original). It comprises the accumulation of imperial potential, the paradigm formation required for the shift to late capitalism. One ultimate result of this process—a consequence crucial to the novels of the period—is the production of what Said calls a “hierarchy of spaces” that situates the “metropolitan center” at the nucleus of a constellation of less domestic, less controlled territories whose force in this structure serves to provide “stability and prosperity at home.” Under the aegis of its centrality, the word “home” accrues “extremely potent resonances” in relation to the foreign that counters it (58–59). These are already weighty claims for the importance of a geographical inclination and the schism between home and away, but Said articulates far weightier ones, ultimately tethering the geographical to the epistemological. “The geographical sense,” he argues, “makes projections—imaginary, cartographic, military, economic, historical, or in a general sense cultural. It also makes possible the construction of knowledge” (78). Such confidence in the absolute authority of space for the production of culture creates a decidedly unequal relationship between space and the literary text. Moretti, in an effective but reductive phrase, characterizes this sort of inequality as a belief that “space acts upon style,” that space determines style (Atlas 43). Despite Moretti’s curt assessment, though, Said’s particular attention to map-making is important here.

Because it expresses and concretizes acquired knowledge, cartography acts as an agent of disenchantment, a process that will become an immediate and obvious concern to writers of fiction. Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities specifically addresses the potentially secularizing and demystifying consequences of the cartographical project in an important but largely unnoticed leitmotif. Along with the census and the museum—which inform my reading of Balzac’s Peau de chagrin and, briefly, of Fontane’s Effi Briest—maps were, Anderson claims, powerful tools toward hegemonic legitimation within imperial culture (164). However, as a constituted form of knowledge, they have the related and perhaps unintended effect of evis-

2. The year after Anderson’s book appeared, Susan Stewart’s On Longing further developed this idea of the museum as a “mode of control and containment” (160).
cerating or displacing other forms of knowledge. As the world found itself mapped, all its darker and unknown corners reduced to grid and number, “Cairo and Mecca were beginning to be visualized in a strange new way, no longer simply as sites in a sacred Muslim geography, but also as dots on paper sheets which included dots for Paris, Moscow, Manila and Caracas, . . . these indifferently profane and sacred dots” (170–71). Anderson sees this loss of one “style of continuity”—the master narrative of religion—as the birthplace of another: the master narrative of nationalism (11). Anderson’s theory of the birth of the nation from the death of religion is provocative here, because it relates interestingly to two other genealogical pronouncements: Moretti’s story, in Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900, of the birth of the nation-state as it is negotiated and concretized by novelists, by their willful drawing and redrawing of boundaries both cultural and ethnographical; and Lukács’s earlier account of the birth of the novel as a substitute or glue for the now “broken” “circle whose closed nature was the transcendental essence of” the lives of the ancients (Theory of the Novel 33). Lukács posits the novel as both result of and potential remedy for the modern discontinuity represented by the broken circle. His essay imagines a key if not foundational role, within the history of the novel, for the process of desacralization to which Anderson directs our attention, and thus, if we pair these two thinkers, a commensurate role for the imperial pursuits that Anderson finds partly culpable of such desacralization.

To state the problem only in this way, though, is to miss half of imperialism. If, by partnering Anderson and Lukács, one can situate empire at the source of the demystification that necessitates the rise of the novel, one must also see it as the enabler of adventure narratives like Robinson Crusoe and of the mystery at work in the imported foreigners of Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane, whose novels often envision foreign figures as romantic potential. Fiction invokes the unstable relationship between colony and imperial center—even at the most bureaucratized level of this relationship—as a narrative possibility. Moretti suggests this in the course of his disagreement with Said over Austen’s Mansfield Park. Said claims, in Culture and Imperialism, that Austen’s structure of the novel and the crucial role that the Bertrams’ colonial plantation plays in it, demonstrate or reproduce in novelistic form the national domestic center’s absolute, factual economic need for the colonies: “What sustains this life [at Mansfield Park] materially is the Bertram estate in Antigua. . . . [N]o matter how isolated and insulated the English place

3. Peter Brooks will later speculate, like Lukács, that “[t]he emergence of narrative plot as a dominant mode of ordering and explanation may belong to the large process of secularization . . . which marks a falling-away from those revealed plots . . . that appeared to subsume transitory human time to the timeless” (Reading 6).
(e.g., Mansfield Park), it requires overseas sustenance... The Bertrams could not have been possible without the slave trade, sugar, and the colonial planter class” (85, 89, 94). Moretti’s objections to this are both historical and narratological. On historical grounds, he explicitly doubts that the English economic need for the colonies was as dire as Said claims, and he adduces a number of historical analyses of British imperialism to support this doubt. On narratological grounds, Moretti offers another reason for Austen’s use of Antigua in Mansfield Park, one that encapsulates the idea of the demands of narrative: tension, complication. In order to allow for some chaos at Mansfield Park, without which we have no novel, Sir Bertram’s watchful presence must be sent far, far away. According to Moretti, Sir Bertram “goes, not because he needs the money, but because Austen needs him out of the way” (26). In other words, it is the English novel, and not the English economy, that absolutely needs the colonies in Mansfield Park. By repositioning narrative articulations of space at the center of national imaginings of it, as Atlas of the European Novel does, Moretti ultimately claims that Austen creates her novels’ England. Or, to warp his earlier pronouncement: The novel acts upon space. Henri Mitterand has similarly claimed that novelistic space is “a topology that imposes its own laws on real cartography” (L’Illusion réaliste 8). Yet between the novel that acts on space and the space that acts on the novel, there exists a more complex arrangement endemic to the enterprise of literary realism—a type of novel which, in its efforts realistically to record or reflect a certain space (space acting upon style), finds its mere recording of space challenged by its need to accede to the demands of the narrative and to complicate that fixed space (style acting upon space). “Crooked paths” rather than straight ones, writes Viktor Shklovsky in his Theory of Prose, “are called into being by specific conditions—by the demands of the plot” (36).

This tension between style and space can be recast as one more familiar to the long tradition of aesthetics, the tension between narrative form, the manner and structure of narration, and narrative content, the object of narration. It animates the novels analyzed here, just as it silently anchors the disagreement between Moretti and Said. Despite their differences, however, Moretti, Said and Anderson are all invested in the question of how Western imperial projections come to construct the world outside, be it by cartographical or cultural imposition. This question has crucial resonance within

4. These multiple ellipses in the quotes from Said mirror Moretti’s quoting of Said’s text.
5. Austen’s novel is not the first to use a trip to the colonies to generate domestic fiction. In Sarah Scott’s 1762 novel, A Description of Millenium Hall, the narrator George Ellison writes that his entire journey through western England—which makes possible his visit to Millenium Hall and thus the novel describing it—is the product of a doctor’s prescribed remedy for “the ill effects of my long abode in the hot and unwholesome climate of Jamaica, where, while I increased my fortune, I gradually impaired my constitution” (54).
the unfolding of a novel, whether because geography and national socioeco-
nomic necessity can dictate the course of the novel (Said) or because the
novel’s formal need for complication dictates its geographical projections,
the space that it treats as content (Moretti). Neither Said nor Moretti consid-
ers in particular the role that secularization or disenchantment—the sudden
perceived limitation of the possibilities for narrative complication—may
play in addressing the question of the novel’s complex relationship with its
own space. John McClure’s book on what he calls Late Imperial Romance is
extremely useful to that end, though. McClure writes that British novelists at
the turn of the twentieth century—he refers specifically to H. Rider Haggard,
Virginia Woolf, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Joseph Conrad—were so troubled
by the disappearance of mysterious, story-engendering places occasioned
by the complete mapping of the world, that they sought to either unmapped the
mapped and known world or find fictional potential in new, siteless geopoliti-
cal phenomena, like espionage.6

Thus in 1894, almost a decade after the onset of the scramble for Africa, H.
Rider Haggard complains that “soon the ancient mystery of Africa will have van-
ished” and wonders where “will the romance writers of future generations find
a safe and secret place, unknown to the pestilent accuracy of the geographer,
to lay their plots?” In Haggard’s paradigmatic version of what is to become an
oft-repeated tale, the key terms are “Africa,” “mystery,” “romance,” and “geogra-
pher.” The first three are aligned, of course, against the fourth: the geographer,
appt representative of rationalizing forces, threatens to map Africa and rob it of
its mystery, leaving “romance writers” without a setting for their stories. Eigh-
ten years later in another imperial romance, Arthur Conan Doyle combines the
same elements in a strikingly similar lament. Now that “the big blank spaces in
the map are all being filled in,” a character declares in The Lost World (1912),
“there’s no room for romance anywhere.” And just three years later, in Virginia
Woolf’s first novel, The Voyage Out (1915), we find a character condemning
imperial entrepreneurs for “robbing a whole continent of mystery.” (11)

McClure records this preoccupation with the fate of the imagination as cul-

6. Lenin, in Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, envisions a different yet equally
claustrophobic possibility brought on by the complete mapping and colonization of the world, one
that will be acted out in the form of the Cold War beginning with World War II:

As there are no unoccupied territories—that is, territories that do not belong to any state—in
Asia and America, ... we must say that the characteristic feature of this period is the final
partition of the globe—not in the sense that a new partition is impossible—on the contrary,
new partitions are possible and inevitable—but in the sense that the colonial policy of the
capitalist countries has completed the seizure of the unoccupied territories on our planet.
For the first time the world is completely divided up, so that in the future only redivision is
possible; territories can only pass from one “owner” to another, instead of passing as unowned
territory to an “owner.” (76)
minating in the waning moments of the nineteenth century, the moment at which the completion of the global cartographical project finally “eradicat[es] the last elsewhere,” but it is in fact a much older concern. Goethe could, in 1804, already quote Wilhelm von Humboldt’s complaint that archaeological advances were being made only “at the cost of the imagination” [auf Kosten der Phantasie] (12.109). Later in the nineteenth century, George Eliot’s characters make similar laments in Middlemarch (1871–72), complaining, for example, that “There should be some unknown regions preserved as hunting-grounds for the poetic imagination” (75). As we shall see, these worries over the fate of the imagination are inextricable from the development of realism in the authors discussed in this project.

Such sentiments might be surprising from the architect of Berlin’s public museums and from the pages of English realism, but the tension at work here—between exploration and the imagination—is reproduced repeatedly in realist novels well before the turn of the twentieth century. Fredric Jameson’s The Political Unconscious accounts for it in a chapter on Balzac, and McClure’s Late Imperial Romance is, in many ways, a long answer to Jameson’s question of how romance can be understood to have survived the processes of disenchantment and secularization. Jameson has more fundamental generic categories in mind, though. Leading into a discussion of Balzac and Dreiser, he proposes that

the problem raised by the persistence of romance as a mode is that of substitutions, adaptations, and appropriations, and raises the question of what, under wholly altered historical circumstances, can have been found to replace the raw materials of magic and Otherness which medieval romance found ready to hand in its socioeconomic environment. A history of romance as a mode becomes possible, in other words, when we explore the substitute codes and raw materials, which, in the increasingly secularized and rationalized world that emerges from the collapse of feudalism, are pressed into service to replace the older magical categories of Otherness which have now become so many dead languages. (130–31)\(^7\)

With Jameson’s question and with McClure’s observations in mind, one can reconsider the relationship between the novel and geography, and in so doing offer three theses. This book will address the manner in which, first, certain nineteenth-century novels rely on an imported colonial figure

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7. Moretti poses a different question of substitutions in a footnote to Atlas of the European Novel: “Did the novel replace devotional literature because it was a fundamentally secular form—or because it was religion under a new guise?” (169 n30; emphasis in original)
to generate or organize their fiction (the “complications” to which Moretti alludes, the “substitute codes” for romance, in Jameson’s wording). Second, in an affront to any established disenchantment or routine expressed by the novel, this peripheral figure occasions a remapping or unmapping of mapped and ordered urban space. And, third, the city becomes an indispensable component of this analysis, by virtue of both its centrality within an imperial infrastructure and its centrality within the narrative structure of many purportedly realist novels. (“Realism,” Peter Brooks claims in Realist Vision, “is nothing if not urban” [131].) Finally, following Said’s equating of space and knowledge, if these novels by Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane are partial contestations of cartography, they must also, by extension, be legible as epistemological testings, perhaps even as duels between different styles of knowledge.

**(b) Imperial Knowledge, Colonial Knowledge: The Fate of Difference**

I left the temple and stood in the blinding sunlight feeling quite benumbed by what I had seen. My European mentality boggled at the experience.

—Heinrich Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*

[As the nationalist B.G. Tilak was later to recall, people “were dazzled at first by the discipline of the British. Railways, Telegraph, Roads, Schools bewildered the people.”]

—Eric Hobsbawn, *The Age of Capital*

The notion of a duel within these novels presupposes a decidedly binarizing paradigm, one that is actually invested in the production of conflict. In his introduction to Late Imperial Romance, McClure points out that this conflict arises in the context of a spatial opposition: “most imperial adventure fiction translates the basic imperial division of the world (metropolis and colonies or potential colonies) into a familiar romance division, with the West represented as a zone of relative order, security and secularity, the non-Western world as a zone of magic, mystery, and disorder” (8). It is important, though, that this division holds true as well for domestic realist fiction in the age of imperialism. Jane Eyre, for example, at the youthful outset of the novel named for her, confesses in 1847 that she thought Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* to be fact rather than fiction and that, “as to the elves, having sought them in vain among foxglove leaves and bells, under mushrooms and beneath the
ground-ivy mantling old wall-nooks, I had at length made up my mind to the sad truth that they were all gone out of England to some savage country, where the woods were wilder and thicker, and the population more scant” (21). Jane’s “sad truth” is that England has been disenchanted, and romance is now the property of other regions. If the particular valences between East and West are not as blatant in realist fiction as they are in romance adventures—that scholarship on realism as a mode has largely ignored them attests to their relative subtlety—it is because realist fiction only rarely makes obvious forays into those zones of “the non-Western world” that are coded as locational opposites to Western order and domesticity. The division and its symbolic power still pertain, though, and the imported foreign figure represents a convenient shorthand for the partition and its lingering tensions; the authors can thus recall or summon the idea of geographical division without abandoning the typical domestic setting of the novel. Jameson writes of the “smuggling” of “magic and providential mystery” that is meant to counter the effects of “rationalization” and provide a sort of “symbolic appeasement” (Political Unconscious 134). The divide between domestic and foreign is often, but not always, cast simply as a divide between imperial and colonial in the novels by Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane to be analyzed here. It expresses itself also as an epistemological tension, a competition between what the text envisions as two radically different forms of knowledge. This tension is perfectly suited to realist fiction, which is itself a narrative mode premised on questions of knowledge and the representation of truth, according to George Levine: “Whatever else [realism] means, it always implies an attempt to use language to get beyond language, to discover some non-verbal truth out there. The history of English realism obviously depended in large measure on changing notions of what is ‘out there,’ of how best to ‘represent’ it, and of whether, after all, representation is possible or the ‘out there’ knowable” (Realistic Imagination 6). Novels that bring the “out there” into the “in here” foreground and amplify the contrasting epistemologies represented by the two terms.

8. Eliot, in Adam Bede (1859), scripts a similarly rustic moment of disenchantment: “It was a wood of beeches and limes, with here and there a light silver-stemmed birch—just the sort of wood most haunted by the nymphs: you see their white sunlit limbs gleaming athwart the boughs, or peeping from behind the smooth-sweeping outline of a tall lime; you hear their soft liquid laughter—but if you look with a too curious sacrilegious eye, they vanish behind the silvery beeches, they make you believe that their voice was only a running brooklet, perhaps they metamorphose themselves into a tawny squirrel that scampers away and mocks you from the topmost bough” (130).

9. Note that Levine stresses an attempt to get beyond language. Levine demonstrates that the authors of realist novels were not at all duped by their own narrative mode; they try to get beyond language but are not naïve enough to think it always possible. Raymond Tallis’s In Defence of Realism addresses this stereotype, along with numerous others, in an insightful treatment of “Misconceptions About Realism” (195–98).
Alongside McClure’s notion of the basic division of the imperial world into zones of order (the imperial center) and zones of disorder (the colonies, the uncharted), many critics and historians have mapped differing epistemologies as a split between East and West or between colonizer and colonized. These debates have remained absent from scholarship on realism, though, and, because they question or complicate some of the fundamental assumptions underlying our views of literary realism, their absence has only aided realism’s long-standing reputation as a ploddingly monological mode whose basic assumptions always go unquestioned. Empirical science, one of the central influences on realism, is in this debate consistently allied with the forces of Western empire. Partha Chatterjee, for example, sees in imperial culture and in anticolonial nationalism a division between two domains—the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the “outside,” of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity.

It is in this “inner” domain, Chatterjee claims, the domain of the “spiritual,” that the East can gain leverage against the West. Said also explicitly links science with the Western impulse toward imperialism in *Orientalism*: “The greatest names are, of course, Linnaeus and Buffon, but the intellectual process by which bodily (and soon moral, intellectual, and spiritual) extension—the typical materiality of an object—could be transformed from mere spectacle to the precise measurement of characteristic elements was very widespread” (119). Buffon will be acknowledged as a major influence by Balzac’s *Comédie humaine*, which mentions him no less than five times in its famous general preface. Said’s picture of a scientific and rational imperialism becomes complicated if not self-contradictory later, however, when he allies empire with religious fanaticism in a passage whose inner tensions will guide most of the chapters in this book. Ashis Nandy, like Chatterjee, most specifically scripts the differences as a contest between styles of knowledge.

10. Recent scholarship on nineteenth-century Europe’s interest in the occult strengthens the notion of a duel between empirical and spiritual epistemologies. As Richard Noakes has pointed out, “Victorian investigators of Spiritualism believed” that such “erratic phenomena” could ultimately “be reduced to natural laws” (24). By 1908, Frank Podmore could write a book called *The Naturalisation of the Supernatural*. Some go so far as to map this duel (as Chatterjee and others do) onto the geographical divisions of imperialism. See Luckhurst and Viswanathan.

11. See also Azim, who writes that “The secular nature of British education in India split the colonial terrain further along lines of secular (colonial) or religious (native) education” (14).
“Resistance,” Nandy asserts, “takes many forms in the savage world. It may take the form of a full-blooded rejection of the modern world’s deepest faith, scientific rationality” (“Shamans” 269). Resistance and the combat implied by it are central as well to the dueling “philosophies of knowledge” that Nandy describes in “The Savage Freud” (96). Nandy points to Freud’s own observation, in a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, that certain of his first Indian readers conceived of him as an Englishman, neatly capturing the manner in which the invasion of a new science or form of knowledge (psychoanalysis) became quickly conflated with a more familiar imperial invasion (101–2).

Science and the empirical epistemology in general are opposed to the epistemology of the oppressed in the colonial equation, as many critics have expressed it. However, certain narrative avatars of scientism in the nineteenth century are even more specifically adduced as uniquely useful to imperialism, and are, not coincidentally, intimately related to the creation of realist narrative. Ranajit Guha, in an essay on the narrative strategies of colonial power, refers to “historiography . . . as a form of colonialist knowledge” where it is bound up with policy (70; emphasis in original). This assumption is already at work in 1811, when William Playfair publishes his study of British Family Antiquity: Containing the Baronetage of Ireland and dismisses all accounts of events in Irish history “previous to the era of authentic history, which began with the invasion of Henry II” (quoted in Gilmartin 30). History, in this context, does not exist in any credible form until the colonialists arrive, and one could state more strongly Guha’s declaration of historiography as colonialist knowledge; proper history, for Playfair in 1811, simply belongs to Britain.12 Playfair’s idea of two histories at odds with each other complements Guha’s expression of history as a battleground: “every struggle for power by the historically ascendant classes in any epoch involves a bid to acquire a tradition” (77). Nandy, too, articulates the notion of resisting the narrative of history within the colonial cultures to which he refers as, by turns, “savage” and “ahistorical”: “The old classification between the historical and ahistorical societies may not have broken down, but all large ahistorical societies now have sizeable sections of population which have become, through a process of over-correction, entirely captive to the historical mode” (“Shamans” 263). Whether in Guha’s idea of historiography, Nandy points out, Kaylan Chatterjee extends this idea of a duel to the domain of literary study, when he treats Lukács’s dismissal, in 1922, of Rabindranath Tagore’s The Home and the World (1915). Lukács objects to what he perceives as a Ghandist “religiosity,” and Nandy draws from this critique a collision between secular literary hermeneutics and texts inflected with religion; see “Lukács’s Choice” (Nandy, Illegitimacy of Nationalism 15–19).

12. In a chapter on “The Concept of Archaism in Anthropology” in Structural Anthropology, Lévi-Strauss observes a similar dynamic in one of two problematic criteria anthropologists use to categorize societies as “primitive”: “the history of these peoples is completely unknown to us, and on account of the lack or paucity of oral traditions and archaeological remains, it is forever beyond our reach” (109; emphasis mine).
Playfair’s idea of “authentic history,” or Eric Hobsbawm’s mention of “un-historical” or “semi-historical” cultures in *The Age of Capital*’s chapter on “Building Nations” (85), history as a type of knowledge becomes a means of categorizing nations.

The preoccupation with history here is important in a discussion of realism, for the increasing prominence of historiography in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is often read alongside the rise of realist narrative, by critics as diverse as Erich Auerbach, who refers to the “historism” of Balzac; Lukács; Ian Watt; and Peter Brooks, who writes of “the nineteenth century’s . . . foregrounding of the historical narrative as par excellence the necessary mode of explanation and understanding” (*Reading* 6–7). Historical consciousness is, furthermore, repeatedly tethered to secular consciousness, a point that Said’s closing remarks in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* make abundantly clear, as he explicitly equates “a sense of history” with “a purely secular view of reality” (290–91). Bearing in mind the realist novel’s debt to historiography and history’s supposed secularism, one must recall as well Guha’s and Dipesh Chakrabarty’s warnings on the limitations of purely secular historiography. Guha, for example, points out that Western historiography “fails to comprehend . . . the religious element in rebel consciousness” when writing about Indian uprisings against the British (83), while Chakrabarty sees such failure as a symptom of more general methodological shortcomings, which the next chapter discusses in more depth. Following Guha’s and Chakrabarty’s pronouncements, attention to what seems unsecular or unrealist in realist narratives forces us to reappraise the relationship between secularism and realism. The novels of Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane on which this project focuses have all been said to employ realist narrative strategies or to belong, simply put, to a body of work or a literary-historical epoch termed “realist.” Yet these novels also rely on energies or epistemologies irreducible to the historiographical and empirical allegiances of realism as most critics—and most realist novels themselves—have understood and constructed it.

**(c) The Problem with Progress: The Fate of Fiction**

The form of the novel is closely linked to the process of demystification, not merely in Lukács’s understanding of demystification as the condition necessary for the rise of the novel, but in an ongoing way, throughout the history of the genre, as Michael McKeon has argued. This becomes clear when one focuses on negotiations of space in the novel, which are especially dynamic.
in the works treated in this project. In elaborating on the idea of the development of homogeneous, disenchanted, grid-like space, Jameson writes that

[t]he emergence of this kind of space will probably not involve problems of figuration so acute as those we will confront in the later stages of capitalism, since here, for the moment, we witness that familiar process long generally associated with the Enlightenment, namely, the desacralization of the world, the decoding and secularization of the older forms of the sacred or the transcendent, the slow colonization of use value by exchange value, the “realistic” demystification of the older kinds of transcendent narratives in novels like Don Quixote, . . . and so on. (“Cognitive Mapping” 349)

The “familiar” Enlightenment desacralization to which he refers is much more complex in the novels treated below, in which it is cast more often against a willful reenchantment. In other words, there is a measure of resistance to this “slow colonization.” Jameson first raises the issue of disenchantment earlier, in The Political Unconscious’s chapter on realism in Balzac discussed briefly above. He reiterates what “any number of ‘definitions’ of realism assert”: “that processing operation variously called narrative mimesis or realistic representation has as its historic function the systematic undermining and demystification, the secular ‘decoding,’ of those preexisting inherited traditional or sacred narrative paradigms which are its initial givens” (152). One must measure these arguments against Jameson’s notion of a “longing for magic and providential mystery,” which might ruthlessly complicate a narrative mode such as realism, whose very aims are, according to Jameson, incompatible with such energies. The conflict between rational demystification and the irrational longing for mystery that Jameson sees in narrative matches the paradox that Said recognizes in Orientalism. In a paragraph meant to delineate the book’s title term, Said unites within his definition of “Orientalism” both realism—which he describes as a mercilessly normative, empirical, and disciplinary discourse—and paranoia, which he opposes to such normativity, empiricism, and history (72).

To envision realism alongside or even in collusion with its opposite, as Said and Jameson appear to do, is to problematize most scholarship on real-

13. I use the idea of reenchantment here differently than Payne does in his book, The Reenchantment of Nineteenth-Century Fiction: Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot and Serialization. While Payne convincingly teases out a “discourse of benevolence and self-sacrifice from a lost Christian culture” (147) in the writings, behavior, and serialization of the three authors he treats, I deploy the term in a manner less restricted to religious tradition and more in line with an aesthetic ancestry of magic, mystery, and romance. This can include, but not be restricted to, religion.

14. Homi Bhabha, in his reading of this passage, repeats the link between “colonial power” and “realism,” claiming that the former’s “system of representation, a regime of truth, . . . is structurally similar to realism” (Location 71).
ism. Since at least Hippolyte Taine, realism as a narrative mode has commonly been viewed as an agent or reflection of scientific positivism and positivist historiography. Eric Downing has pointed out, in a recent study of German realist fiction, that even prominent Germanists such as Robert Holub and Russell Berman have lately constructed realism as “a heavily normed discourse, or style, that purports to universal, transparent, natural, and ahistorical status, and that simultaneously and necessarily excludes or represses both self-consciousness and otherness” (11–12). Katherine Kearns also captures these criticisms well, when she writes that “Realism” is “often charged with blindsiding social, political, and epistemological complexities, with throwing its considerable materialistic weight against all that would challenge or suborn the status quo” (7). Early in the history of the term, realism’s supposedly direct reference to external reality was looked on favorably as a fulfillment of art’s truest mimetic aims, and unfavorably as a pandering to reality that abandoned the Renaissance and neoclassical injunction to improve the world in art, following the aesthetics of Sir Philip Sidney or Boileau, for example. The positive association of realism with an admirable mimetic project—with an attempt to, in Levine’s phrasing, “get beyond words” to some truth or reality—is surely behind the claims of certain modernist critics and writers who proudly described works of modernism as “realist” or “realistic,” even where the version of “reality” and the strategies for representing it are markedly different from those of nineteenth-century authors. Thus can Auerbach speak in Mimesis of Virginia Woolf’s realism just a few years after Woolf herself all but labels James Joyce a realist in her essay, “Modern Fiction.” Lukács, fearful of the modernist trend toward a broader application and muddying of the term realism, attempts to reinstall a barrier in 1957, in his The Meaning of Contemporary Realism: We are faced, Lukács claims, with “the dilemma of the choice between an aesthetically appealing, but decadent modernism, and a fruitful critical realism. It is the choice between Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann” (92). For Lukács, then, if his choice of Kafka and Mann as the exemplary dichotomy is any indication, realism opposes modernism because it is constituted by a reality immediately familiar and recognizable as such. This is clearly not the “reality” that is meaningless outside of quotation marks, to

15. Mortimer gives a useful and brief version: “Realism is a historical term. It became a widespread critical concept in France only in the late 1840s and 1850s and was sanctioned in 1856 when a journal of that name appeared, Duranty’s Le Réalisme, or in 1857 when Champfleury’s essays in defense of the concept were published, with the same title” (3). Marshall Brown reaches further back, examining the genealogy of the word “real” in aesthetic and philosophical discourse in the mid- to late-eighteenth century (226) and ultimately measuring it against Hegelian Wirklichkeit and its impact on Auerbach’s influential conception of the representation of reality.

16. The essay’s German title is Wider den mißverstandenen Realismus, or Against Misunderstood Realismus, which was somewhat defanged in English. Theodor Adorno takes issue with many of Lukács’s points in Adorno’s “Extorted Reconciliation,” and especially contests his claims about the choice between Mann and Kafka.
which Vladimir Nabokov refers later in the century in his postscript to *Lolita* (314). The consequences of this sort of split can be seen more broadly in the modernist caricature of realism as a naïve faith in its own referentiality to a knowable reality. The novels of Samuel Beckett, for example, repeatedly lampoon this trust as a troubling dishonesty on the part of writers who gesture toward external realities as context or condition for their narratives.\(^{17}\) Even critics who would defend realist narrative against accusations of referential naïveté have nonetheless demeaned it as “régressive” because of its attempt to construct a “referential fullness” [plénitude référentielle] within itself, an idea sponsored by both Roland Barthes, in the celebrated “L’effet de réel,” and Pierre Macherey, in his chapter on Balzac’s *Les Paysans* in *A Theory of Literary Production* (Barthes 90). Acknowledging that there are already instances of aggressive anti-realism in the later nineteenth century (Nietzsche, for example), the more strident and enduring critiques are born in the modernist moment and piqued further by poststructuralist recontextualizations of the idea of representation itself.

Realism escapes these attacks—and becomes much more complex—when one reads it, not merely as the disciplinary narrative that it partly is, but also as the counternarrative that unfolds simultaneously. In responses to critiques of realism by both modernist and poststructuralist critics, George Levine and Marshall Brown in 1981 offer more nuanced and capacious conceptions of realist narrative as a site of struggle. Their posture provides a framework in which to reconsider the novels discussed in this book. These novels are explicitly implicated in the realist endeavor by both their narrators and their authors, but they are also works within which the value of realism can be and is contested. This contest is often initiated through the introduction of foreign figures. Partially a sign of its time, Levine’s study openly casts itself as a response to “the antireferential bias of our criticism and to the method of radical deconstruction that has become a commonplace” (*Realistic Imagination* 3).\(^{18}\) Against the stereotype of a monological realism, Levine asserts instead that “realism posits ‘mixed’ conditions” (4). Brown’s essay strives, similarly, to give “a flexible historical picture” (233) of realist narrative and of definitions of realism. Robert Holub derides Brown’s “flexibility”

\(^{17}\) Raymond Tallis (112) cites Beckett’s *Molloy* (1951). The novel’s second part begins with the lines “It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows,” a realist assertion of place and time severely undercut—even mocked—by the novel’s final lines: “I went back into the house and wrote, ‘It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows.’ It was not midnight. It was not raining” (Beckett 92; 176). Beckett’s explicit attacks against a prime novel of European realism (Fontane’s *Effi Briest*) in the play, *La dernière bande* (Krepp’s *Last Tape*, 1958) have long been noted by scholars, largely for their comic value. See Turner (234).

\(^{18}\) Furst, too, offers a more nuanced picture: “The realist novel must be taken at one and the same time as a record (more or less faithful, as the case may be) of a past social situation and as a texture made of verbal signs” (*All Is True* 24). Kearns, like Furst, espouses a more complex view of realism from *within* a deconstructive stance, holding that realism cannot be monological, because everything written is already of (at least) two minds.
as “amorphousness” in his 1991 monograph on German realism, but the flexibility is, for Brown, precisely the point (14). Brown explains realist narrative as a product of “interplay” between “Jakobson’s metonymic or sequential order” and “metaphorical or substitutional order” (231); as “the ordered or hierarchical intersection of contrasting codes” (233); and as “a structure of ordered negations perceived within the text quite independently of any relationship between the text and what is assumed to be its ‘world’” (237). The emphasis is on realism’s internal struggles—struggles made explicit by all three of the authors studied here.

The present project, though, will endeavor to read an interplay between the strategies of realist narrative and the material that realist narrative describes and which, as we shall see, frequently challenges those strategies. Brown makes a useful distinction between “realisms of form” and “realisms of content” that is crucial here, because it maps readily onto Moretti’s distinction between style and space so important to the novels discussed below (233). Yet Brown’s distinction is no less important generally, because literary realism has always been theorized through discussions of either the form or the content of the work, or, less frequently if at all, of both. Balzac’s own appeal to natural history, for example, constructs a formal and structural ancestry for the strategies he hopes to develop in the Comédie humaine; his preoccupation with physical material and his painstaking description of it, on the other hand, have led some critics to see that material content (be it a social milieu writ large or a single room in a small Paris pension) as the real force of his realism. However, the divorce between the text and its world implied by this arrangement clashes, to some degree, with the stated missions of Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane, and with the discernible preoccupations of their works. All three of these authors can be said to adhere, in both the form and the content of the novels analyzed below, to an abiding interest in and debate over two developments related to the imperialist epistemology that Nandy, Chatterjee, Guha, and Said describe: historiography and empiricism. Some critics have linked these two terms as interrelated developments, but no deliberate link between them is necessary for one to appreciate the extent to which historiography and empiricism are equally essential in the fiction of Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane, and in the long tradition of scholarship on realist fiction.

19. Howells would likely abolish this distinction, claiming rather that true realism is a realism of both form and content: “Realism is nothing more than the truthful treatment of material,” he writes, in a formulation that simultaneously highlights material (content) and the manner of its treatment (form) (58). See also Kearns, who claims that “Realism premises that observable realities can be and should be articulated novelistically through verisimilitude” (86).

20. Or of any realism. Bill Brown refers to a general “mimetic physicality of realism” (166).

21. See Hayden White’s Figural Realism (43) and McKeon (42–43, 68, 420–21).
To say that empiricism and historiography operate, in the nineteenth-century novel, at the levels of both content and form is to make a few specific claims in each case. First, it is to claim that, taking the example of historiography, these writers structure their novels (the level of form) according to conventions of historical narration, causal connection, and temporality. Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* begins to challenge these conventions under extreme pressure from the shrinking of its world (content thus complicates form). Second, the novels simultaneously appeal, at the level of content and often in a strikingly explicit manner, to accepted historical or social reality outside of their narrative. This dual use of history, as both form and content, is not necessarily unique to the nineteenth century. Indeed, reliance on history as a source for narrative (history as content), and a view of historiography as a strategy (form) for arriving at or articulating truth, are at least as old as the modern novel. *Don Quijote*’s narrator speaks of “truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, storehouse of great deeds, witness of the past, example and lesson to the present, warning to the future” ([la verdad, cuya madre es la historia, émula del tiempo, depósito de las acciones, testigo de lo pasado, ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir]) (1.95). The notion of history as *depósito de las acciones* hints simultaneously at the levels of content and form, for in addition to “deeds,” isolated historical episodes, the word *acciones* also denotes the plots of literary works. History is, therefore, not just as external source for content or isolated episode (deed) but also an organizer of larger structure (plot). Balzac, Fontane, and—perhaps most explicitly—Trollope all lean on history in both the form and content of their works: in the form, because their narratives follow the historiographical rules of causal connection; and in the content, because they rely on external historical reality as backdrop for their plots, as the familiar, material frame of reference, what Richard Altick has called the “presence of the present” (the Parliamentary interests of Trollope’s novels, for example). These authors also foreground empiricism and the knowledge of the senses, albeit in different ways and to different ends. The deployment of empiricism in their novels goes beyond what one critic has seen as realistic détaillisme (Dubois 88), and it surpasses the preoccupation with material things and places, or attempts at cartographical verity, to which so many critics have called attention. Rather, like historiography, empiricism also becomes an element of narrative form simultaneously deployed by and disputed within the novels treated below. Ian Watt, in *The Rise of the Novel*, goes so far as to pinpoint empiricism as the single starting point for realism: “Modern realism, of course, begins from the position that truth can be discovered by the individual through his senses” (12). When Balzac’s narrator in *La Peau de chagrin*, for example, proceeds by revealing only what is externally observ-
able before making deductions or hypotheses based on what is observable, the novel is adopting the form of empirical science. Balzac deploys that mode of narration everywhere in *La Comédie humaine*.

Historiography and empiricism organize the fiction of Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane, and the particular confluence of the two in the novels treated below constitutes an important moment of literary-historical development. These preoccupations are not the sole property of the nineteenth century, but they are most central there. Indeed, Marshall Brown points out that such “elements of realism can undoubtedly be found in the literature of all ages, though it seems undeniable that their frequency and prominence increased in the nineteenth century” (233). Critical though he is of Brown, even Holub concedes this point, the notion of a certain “era” of realism grounded on the sudden historical prominence of realist strategies (174). Fundamentally, the two forces of historiography and empiricism, taken together, articulate another narrative (or collective fantasy), that of progress: the history of science, one might say, or the workings of science within history. That much is already implied in Max Weber’s claim, “Scientific work is chained to the course of progress” (137). Weber makes this statement in the very essay, “Science as a Vocation,” in which he famously articulates the costs of that progress as “disenchantment” [Entzauberung], the eradication of mystery through knowledge. If the narrative of progress—or, as Chakrabarty would have it, the “metanarrative of progress”—is so “deeply embedded in our institutional lives however much we may develop . . . an attitude of incredulity toward such metanarratives,” this notion of progress is no less a cornerstone of the novels to be analyzed below, several of which are directly interested in the lives of institutions (Chakrabarty 88). Though coded differently by each author and by each novel, progress is both foregrounded and feared in these texts through the use of the imported foreign figure and the specific significance of each importation. Balzac’s novels of the early 1830s tend to script the advances of science and empire as an explicit dissolution of mystery or romance, challenged by the marginal characters and objects that become central to the texts. Trollope demonstrates, over the course of his six Palliser novels and the contemporaneous *The Way We Live Now*, the difficulties for narrative in light of this disenchantment and the assault of progress on tradition. Progress is linked, for a distressed Trollope, to the increasingly easy communication of England with the outside world, the communication that facilitates in the first place the arrival of the foreign in the space of the domestic. Fontane, too, relies on the technological tropes of simplified communication, both verbal (in the image of a character in *Cécile* who is employed laying

22. Hobsbawm refers to the “secular ideology of progress” (*Age of Capital* 271).
telegraph wires all over the world) and physical (in the image of Effi Briest's port town as a node of global commerce and exchange), as emblem of the struggle between historical advancement and mystery.

One can return here to Moretti's concept of novels that build nations, where this introduction began, for the nation is itself partially a product of the collective fantasy or narrative of progress. Homi Bhabha has claimed that the narrative of the nation is an attempt to “mediate between the teleology of progress” and the “timeless' discourse of irrationality” (“DisseminiNation” 294). The same is certainly true of realist novels, even when studies of realist novels have failed to notice the extent to which the relationship with the irrational is in fact one of mediation rather than simple exclusion. The irrationality of which Bhabha speaks is, however, neither timeless nor nationless in the novels treated below. It is, rather, constructed precisely through its historical and extranational associations. As such, it is content to challenge the form of realism.

(d) Précis of Chapters

The rise of the museum embodies a slow merger of empiricism and historiography. In chapter 1, this merger provides a means of reading the introduction, into Balzac’s novelistic output and main metropolitan setting, of a foreign figure, the titular Peau de chagrin. A famous scene early in the novel, in which the protagonist browses a collection of antiquities in a shop before bringing them into a historical coherence, has been read by some critics as an example of the fantastic (e.g., Tzvetan Todorov) and by others (e.g., Henri Mitterand) as a nascent realism. The novel fosters a duel between these two modes, though, between a rigidly empirical narrative method and an object—the Middle Eastern talisman found in the shop—that cannot be explained by empirical science and that lies outside the necessities and causalities of history. La Peau de chagrin finally allegorizes a disenchantment that is explicitly linked to science; the talisman dwindles to nothing and, in the final scene, Balzac’s narrator reckons the costs of technology.

Chapter 2 places the imperial contexts of La Peau de chagrin—largely ignored by critics—into sharper relief, introducing the manner in which empire and questions of colonial violence come to structure Balzac’s Le Père Goriot. Both novels lean on references to the colonies, but Goriot’s allegory of the Mandarin, when read against the domestic machinations on which it passes judgment, links exoticism, colonial violence, and money. The criminal Vautrin and his embodiment of a global criminal underworld appear to open
the city as a site of mystery; however, he only serves, finally, to underline the text’s ambivalence toward vestiges of romantic thought and action, which are consistently undercut by the language of rationalization. The Mandarin represents the notion, introduced in *La Peau de chagrin*, that domestic gains come at the expense of colonial others, but it also highlights the dubious position of the foreign in the novel.

Paris is embedded in a global imperial geography in *Le Père Goriot*, but *La Fille aux yeux d’or* makes this arrangement even more immediate. It seems, in the latter novel, that the entire world comes to Paris, and chapter 3 investigates the narrative consequences of this diminished distance. The city is methodically unmapped, rendered foreign and mysterious in order to meet the demands of a disenchanted, romance-hungry Parisian. Against prevailing readings of this text, which have inevitably divorced the anthropological tones of the first portion from the more comfortably narrative tones of the second portion, I argue that the two halves function together in an attempted description of Paris and progress. France’s capital becomes, through the imported colonial figures in Balzac’s early novels, both the specific site and paradigm of disenchantment and the site of timid resistance to this process.

Chapter 4 charts the shifting and problematic mobilizations of foreignness—specifically, Irishness—in Trollope’s *Phineas Finn*. In this second of the six Palliser novels, Trollope draws his title hero from Ireland, which he explicitly equates with romance and even refers to as “the colonies next door.” This novel and its sequel are aberrant in the English tradition because Trollope situates the Irish in them so centrally, and the novels begin to confront a problem of realistic representation. Forced to grapple with vestiges of romance in an otherwise realist text, *Phineas Finn* codes and recodes the value and location of Irishness in a clumsy effort to balance romance and the real. Trollope’s Pallisers share with Balzac’s early fiction a concern over the fate of romance even as they attempt to meticulously record the political and colonial history of the time.

The challenges that *Phineas Finn* cannot quite meet are hyperbolized in the perennially underappreciated *Phineas Redux*. Chapter 5 examines the manner in which the quandary over how to represent “romantic” foreigners within a realist novel begins to alter Trollope’s conception of space. The Palliser novels also weigh disenchantment within this conflict, from *Phineas Finn*’s demystification of Scott’s romantic territories to the reenchantment of these same territories in its sequel, which is marked finally by a startling urban chaos and stylistic slippage. *Phineas Redux* introduces foreign energies into the English capital—murderous Scots, Continental rogues—and this tension occasions, by the end of the novel, an epistemological crisis explicitly wedded
to a crisis of fiction. As Phineas Redux ends, Trollope begins the work of placing the city in a global geography that will ultimately be expressed in terms of the burgeoning global market in The Way We Live Now.

Chapter 6 examines the continued, ambivalent portrayal of foreign figures as simultaneous signifiers of the romantic and the rational in The Way We Live Now, with specific focus on the Americans. The railway speculator Augustus Melmotte, the novel’s most enduring and villainous character, is a quasi-Gothic figure borrowed from Goethe, Charles Maturin, and Balzac. Though Melmotte is too often—and mistakenly—read as Jewish, The Way We Live Now’s uncertainty as to his origins is important, and Trollope uses him to anchor a stark portrait of global commerce and the dangerous interconnectedness of distant places. As in Balzac’s La Fille aux yeux d’or, the outside world becomes increasingly present in London, and Trollope’s narrative retreats to the countryside, the novel’s last bastion of Englishness and stability. The demands of Trollope’s portrayal of the shrinking world ruthlessly complicate his normal, staid pattern of narrative exposition, as the city and world he depicts become irrevocably compact.

Chapter 7 begins by acknowledging some of the complexities that attend any analysis of imperialism in the context of Germany, which differs significantly from that of other European national traditions in which colonial undertakings occurred earlier and were more entrenched. Fontane’s fiction begins by constructing a German metropolis that can then be inserted into a global geography, and, when seen in this light, his novels build toward a crucial moment in Cécile when a character declares Berlin a Weltstadt or World-City. Cécile foregrounds the differences between the urban and rural at a time when those differences, as one character remarks, are seen to steadily decrease. Despite this, the novel marks Berlin off as a site of struggle between disenchantment and the desire for romance, through the character of Gordon, a Scot who emblematizes simultaneously the processes of globalization through technology and the possibility for romance and narrative complication.

Cécile sets the stage, in a sense, for Fontane’s masterpiece, Effi Briest, through a damaging depiction of (quasi-)adultery that clashes with Fontane’s earlier, more optimistic portrayal of it in L’Adultera (1882), and through an attention to the shrinking world. This shrinking—the reduction of unknown regions to tourist sites and ordered maps—and the linked issue of disenchantment are keys to understanding what Fontane called the “pivot” [Drehpunkt] of Effi Briest: the novel’s Chinese ghost. Scholarly attention to the ghost reflects the limitations of common understandings of “realism,” which can readily account for the ethnicity of the ghost but is at a loss in the face of its supposed supernatural property. Moreover, the spatial situating of adultery,
for which the ghost stands as partial symbol, complicates its potential as a romantic alternative. Finally, pronouncements on imperialist organization of space by Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Raymond Williams enable a discussion of Fontane’s arrangement of zones of order and zones of romance, where this introduction began. Marginal areas become portals for the reintroduction of enchantment into a secularized domestic space organized by metropolitan Berlin. On these attempted reenchantments, though, Fontane remains ambivalent. The world’s mysterious places have been quotidianized, the novel asserts. The figure of the Chinese ghost foregrounds the duel between romance and the real, and its movements and shifting status circumscribe a simultaneous longing for enchantment and a final acknowledgment of its impossibility.
The Limits of “Realism”

(a) Realism and Romance, Reconsidered

Knowledge has transformed the world from a system of well-marked moral domains into a complicated geography, period. And yet, this very difficulty seems to have induced the novel to its most ambitious wager: to be the bridge between the old and the new, forging a symbolic compromise between the indifferent world of modern knowledge, and the enchanted topography of magic story-telling. Between a new geography, that we cannot ignore—and an old narrative matrix, that we cannot forget.

—Moretti, Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900

Four linked problems are implied by the idea of the limits of realism, and we could label them problems of geography, epistemology, aesthetic terminology, and periodization. These problems are related enough that one could imagine them as causes and effects of each other—as mutually reinforcing, even—and they hover around the historical narrative of empire, with its warring core concepts of empiricism and enchantment. They have all arisen and been discussed in the preceding chapters, to varying degrees, because they are provoked by the novels on which I have focused and the disproportionate importance they accord to foreign figures within European metropolitan settings. Four of the eight novels analyzed in depth here are even named for these figures (Balzac’s Peau de chagrin and La Fille aux yeux d’or; and Trollope’s Phineas diptych), and this is not to mention Trollope’s Melmotte, said to be the center of London, or Fontane’s Chinese Ghost, the author’s pivot (Drehpunkt) in Effi Briest. I have tried to show what can happen to the form of the realist novel and to its articulation of space when these marginal figures become so central. There are additional consequences, though, and
some larger conclusions can be teased out through a brief look at the various problems implied by the limits of realism.

The marginal characters themselves represent, on one level, geographical limits of realism. They embody the faraway places from which they are said to come, but, because of their presence in metropolitan centers of Europe, they also stand paradoxically for the collapse of the distances between those faraway places and the domestic settings in which realism encounters them. Accompanying that collapse of distance is the chaotic intermingling of foreign and familiar, which results in the rationalization of the exotic foreign and the abortive reenchantment of the domestic. Internal limits, such as those between city and country, also come into play in new ways, and there follows a frustration of boundaries between zones of order and zones of disorder. This geographical valence is, moreover, inextricable from the frustration of the dueling epistemologies linked to domestic order and colonial disorder—realist, secular, European reason and the nonrealist, nonsecular, irrational world beyond Europe. This is, at least, how so many postcolonial critics have described imperialism’s schismatic view of types of knowledge, and the novels adopt this view as well. Yet attending to realism as an epistemology—or as a narrative mode organized by a certain epistemology—creates new limits and ushers in a different set of problems, because it goes right to issues of aesthetics and periodization. In other words, it goes to the two main ways in which we normally employ the term “realism”: to designate a method/mode, and to designate a period. As I demonstrated in the introduction, and as critics like Raymond Tallis and George Levine have shown, realism’s epistemology invariably gets pigeonholed or stereotyped as rigidly secular, empirical, scientific, rational, and so on. Even if it is true that the epistemology which we call “realist” fits those stereotypes, however, it is not so simply true of the narratives that we call “realist” or of the literary-historical period we call that of “realism.” As the preceding chapters have shown, these canonically realist authors regularly amplify their texts’ own claims to empiricism and secularism while simultaneously—and often explicitly and self-consciously—troubling those very claims. When some of the most famous and successful realist texts or authors of realist texts consistently evoke energies at odds with supposedly realist epistemology, and when those energies are not always neatly wrapped up or unambiguously disciplined, then what we are calling realist narrative cannot easily be reduced to narrative that deploys a realist epistemology. Nor can any so-called era or epoch of realism.

One recent historical overview of realism and naturalism underscores some of the difficulties in these last two limits of “realism” (our use of it as a way of describing a transhistorical aesthetic mode and as a period-specific
literary-historical designation). In the preface and introduction to *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition* (2005), Richard Lehan continues a critical tradition that pits romance and realism against each other as mutually exclusive terms in a Darwinian fight for survival.1 “Writers in the early nineteenth century,” Lehan writes, believed “that the romantic view of nature was inadequate to the new city with its commercial and industrial institutions. Realism/naturalism was the first corrective to this anachronistic view. As a result, subject matter and narrative technique were drastically changed. The romance did not do justice to the new reality” (xii). Later, “Realism/naturalism challenged a false idealism” and thus “gradually eliminated the fantasy elements it shared with the romance from its plots and began depicting a more ordinary reality. Rider Haggard gave way to Rudyard Kipling, Kipling to Jack London, London to Joseph Conrad, Conrad to Ernest Hemingway, Hemingway to the noir reality of a James M. Cain—each new form of the mode moving it further away from forms of the romance” (xxi–xxii). There is an unspoken tension, in this assessment, between romance as a type of content (the “nature” of the romantics) and romance as a form or structure; the genealogy of imperial and late-imperial romances chosen are not examples of Wordsworth’s domestic natural landscapes (static content) but rather of narrative structures driven by adventure and exploration.2 In any case, though, this understanding of the development has realism slaying the falsely ideal and “anachronistic” dragon of romance, and Lehan turns to Balzac as the writer who begins evacuating romance from the novel (44–48). One can trace this view through René Wellek, who claims in the early 1960s that “realism definitely breaks with the romantic” (253), and at least as far back as Lukács’s *Studies in European Realism*, in 1948, where he claims that Balzac “overcame” romanticism (64). Yet Lukács quickly produces a paradox analogous to Said’s paradox in *Orientalism*, and such paradoxes might finally be endemic to realism. According to Lukács, romanticism was just “one feature of Balzac’s total conception, a feature which he overcame and developed further” (my emphases). Lukács does not elaborate on the role of romanticism in Balzac’s realist attempt at “an active and objective presentation of things in themselves.” But this dialectical model offers an alternative to the zero-sum configuration, in which realism appears as a necessary answer to new realities, and romantic modes are discarded as hopelessly out

1. Moretti’s recent *Graphs Maps Trees* offers a different Darwinian model of literary-historical development, one that emphasizes evolutionary theory’s ability to account for the inheritance and diversity of literary forms in addition to their emergence and extinction. See esp. 67–92.

2. There are probably very romantic roots to the idea of common or ordinary reality often linked to realism. It was one of the main drives of Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and is advanced repeatedly in their famous 1800 Preface. Knoepflmacher explicitly links the Preface’s concern with common, ordinary reality to the development of George Eliot’s realism (12).
of step with a modern knowledge that will not accommodate them.

The monological view of realism that has persisted presents clear limitations for describing an aesthetic mode or a literary-historical period. It either abominates realism as a stereotype that any close examination of realist narrative belies, or it elevates realism as an absolute ideal that the works we call realist cannot and do not really meet. Most often, the critical reaction to this incongruity amongst scholars of realism has been to eliminate from consideration what does not fit the model of “ordinary,” empirical reality. We see such exclusions at work in, for example, the dismissal of the Chinese ghost by prominent critics of Effi Briest. Fontane’s novel, moreover, appears very late in the game, at a time when one would expect realism to have already been crowned the victor in its struggle against superfluous romance. So, it is undoubtedly true that romantic conceptions of the world were “anachronistic” in the era of industrialization and urbanization which Lehan describes and which critics situate as the historical frame of realism. Authors generally allied with realism, including the ones discussed above, openly concede this, beginning with Balzac’s La Peau de chagrin: Paris and the nineteenth century are “times and places where magic should be impossible” (10.79). It is equally true that the “romantic view of nature” was “inadequate” to this new and disenchanted reality, and Trollope obligingly unwrites the romance of Scott’s Highlands for us in Phineas Finn, as if to prove their obsolescence. As all of these authors openly admit, the false, romantic values dying along the trail in the nineteenth century’s march toward progress, were not of a piece with what their century knew and lived.

And yet that was precisely their appeal. To Balzac, Trollope, Fontane, and many others, anachronism, idealism (however false), and mystery were necessary counterweights to the insistent presence of the present and to technology that hustled society toward the future and actively diminished distance. Thus, Balzac proffers an object that resists modern scientific explanation; Trollope reverses his own disenchantment of Scott, pushing his prose back into the enchanted Gothic; and Fontane defers to Heine’s older version of the Harz as a region of romance, offsetting the disenchantment of Berlin. Consistently, realist novels and characters in realist novels turn to these very outmoded and perhaps falsely ideal paradigms, contrasting them with new reality and allowing them to challenge and occasionally even undo that new reality. Romance rarely wins, as these novels make clear. But its intensified and foregrounded presence in the texts troubles the notion that it is there simply in order to be abandoned or mocked. In this fact, our conception of realism confronts an internal paradox that sees its assumed mission—to represent reality—challenged by what Jameson calls a “longing for magic and providential mystery” (Political Unconscious 152). Critics of realism
have largely equated a teleology of disenchantment with an uncomplicatedly heroic narrative of progress. We cannot say the same of realist authors.

(b) Epilogue

These particular tensions in nineteenth-century realism survive into the twentieth century and beyond, as does the theme of the central foreigner which focalizes them. However, the sociohistorical contexts become so altered that neither the form nor the exact function of these tensions and themes in the narrative remains the same. In a world knit even more tightly together by technology than the one offered in Fontane’s Cécile or Trollope’s The Way We Live Now, can distance and foreignness still have any currency as markers of enchantment or narrative complication? In a globally integrated economy, can foreign figures still serve as emblems of the collision between empiricism and enchantment, between the familiar and the unfamiliar? There is not space here for a thorough answer, but a few examples might offer a partial one. Through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, certain novelists make use of either realist narrative strategies or foreignness in a manner not wholly dissimilar to the tactics of Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane. Because the material and historically specific world which realists depict is so essential to conditioning the form and content of their works, as I argued in the introduction, and because the perceived realities of the nineteenth century are no more, this particular realism has its historical moment and then can no longer be imaginable in that form. And if changing realities alter the realism that depicts them, they must also alter the values that counter those changing realities, including the foreign figure that was so useful to nineteenth-century novels.

It is nevertheless interesting to look at the changes in the thematic terrain, because in some prominent works of modernist fiction, foreignness is still very important. It becomes, however, central to the plot and to a protagonist’s self-discovery without being central to the depiction of domestic space. This much is summed up by the title and plot of Virginia Woolf’s first novel, The Voyage Out (1915). Urban domestic space, moreover, is itself a locus of alienation in works like Alfred Döblin’s Berlin Alexanderplatz (1929) and Joyce’s Ulysses (1922), but a number of works in the wake of the nineteenth century exploit foreign settings as backdrops for a battle against the perceived claustrophobia of middle-class morality in northern Europe. Against the dark adventure narratives of Conrad, Haggard, May, and Anatole France and the tradition of imperial romance, there is another tradition of touristic or even commercial travel that permits contact with the foreign
without straying totally from domestic concerns. If this is already visible in Fontane’s Gordon, one sees it as well in Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks*\(^3\) (1900), which sends the restless son Christian “out there [drüben]” to South America to satisfy his “adventure-lust [Abenteuerlust]” (237). He returns full of stories of “Chilean stabbings [chilenische Messerabenteuer],” reassurances that there is still a different world out there (448). But Christian is also said, at this same moment, to be “speaking in tongues,” and if there is a different epistemology in the novel it is that of western religious belief within an unbelieving narrative, and not a knowledge attributed to foreign spaces. Missionaries belonging to Madame Buddenbrook’s “Jerusalem Evenings” are described with “parrot heads [Papageiköpfe],” “enigmatic brown eyes,” and hearts “full of marvelous and mysterious knowledge [wunderbaren und geheimnisvollen Kenntnissen]” (280). Their exoticized looks are paired with their mystical knowledge. And it is the *Prophetin* Sesame Weichbrodt who, in a manner reminiscent of Pauline’s war against “modern invasions” in Balzac’s *Peau de chagrin*, stands at the novel’s end “victorious in the good fight she had waged all her life against the onslaughts [Anfechtungen] of reason” (759). For Christian Buddenbrook, as for later characters in Mann’s own *Tod in Venedig* (*Death in Venice*, 1912), André Gide’s *L’immoraliste* (1902), E. M. Forster’s *A Room with a View* (1908), and even perhaps Lawrence Durrell’s later *Alexandria Quartet* (1957–60), these foreign locales hold a value of difference despite their accessibility. The banal continent that Trollope’s and Fontane’s characters complain about can be reenchanted, anyway, if needed—in Forster’s novel, simply losing one’s guidebook will do, as in the chapter “In Santa Croce with No Baedeker.”

In an illuminating conversation with the *Paris Review* in 1959, midway through the publication of the four novels in the *Alexandria Quartet*, Durrell highlights both what these later evocations of the foreign in fiction share with their nineteenth-century predecessors and what makes them part of a wholly different paradigm. He begins by expressing it not as a duel of epistemologies but rather an attempt to marry them:

> The ideas behind this thing [the *Quartet*], which have nothing whatsoever to do with the fun of it as reading matter, are roughly these. Eastern and Western metaphysics are coming to a point of confluence in the most interesting way. It seems unlikely in a way, but nevertheless the two major architects of this breakthrough have been Einstein and Freud. Einstein torpedoed the old Victorian material universe—in other words, the view of matter—and Freud torpe-

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3. The name is Mann’s tribute to Fontane, drawn from a minor character in *Effi Briest* named Buddenbrook.
doed the idea of the stable ego so that personality began to diffuse. Thus in the concept of the space-time continuum you’ve got an absolutely new concept of what reality might be, do you see? Well, this novel is a four-dimensional dance, a relativity poem. (26–27)

At great length, Durrell expounds on the relationship his novels bear to both theoretical physics and Freudian and Jungian psychology. His scientific leanings here recall Balzac’s general preface to the *Comédie humaine*, where Balzac names natural historians as his real inspirations. Yet these very influences Durrell claims emphasize the vast differences between Balzac’s nineteenth-century natural history, which fuses disparate events or objects into coherent narrative, and what Durrell calls his diffuse “stereoscopic narrative with stereophonic personality” (26). The cosmopolitan cast of characters in a foreign city emphasizes this gesture, and it is clear to Durrell that the supposed epistemology of nineteenth-century realism no longer exists as it did. It has become intellectual history, lost out to relativity.

This picture of Durrell’s tetralogy—of its celebration of the epistemological marriage of East and West—is incomplete, though, without a mention of another series of novels from Egypt published at the same time as Durrell’s. Naguib Mahfouz’ *Cairo Trilogy* (1956–57) is palpably influenced by European realism in both its domestic content and narrative method. While Durrell’s multi-novel project seeks to combine its two spatially-coded paradigms of East and West, Mahfouz captures instead the idea of invading forms of knowledge. My introduction discussed the postcolonial theorization of this invasion in the works of Ashis Nandy and others, and Mahfouz clearly narrativizes the process. As Rasheed El-Enany has argued, the trilogy’s depiction of “social progress” pits the forces of Islam against those of “science and socialism” (73). El-Enany reads the second novel in the series, *Palace of Desire*, as a staged battle between the creationism of Islam and the evolutionary theories of Darwin, which enter the novel (and thus the novel’s Cairo) through a newspaper article. The clash between Arabic tradition and European modernity is cast in generational terms (father against son) that amplify the difference on which the novel is based. In this sense, Mahfouz’ trilogy stands out against the current of twentieth-century European writers I listed above, as he engages epistemological questions much as Balzac did, but from vastly different perspectives.

The mobility implied by the novels of the twentieth century already animates the work of Balzac, Trollope, and Fontane. Mobility and life in the foreign for authors and their plots ultimately becomes a new norm in the twentieth century, but it barely alters the idea of foreignness in the twentieth-
and twenty-first-century novel. Foreignness retains the specific weight that it brought to nineteenth-century realist works, and it can still instill a sense of other regions and other types of knowledge. In narrative melting-pots like the London of Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith, or Hanif Kureishi, for example—that is, in today’s truly global city—foreign figures arise more often with a fully historicized biography than with the comically uncertain origins of Trollope’s adventurers in *The Way We Live Now*. Epistemological differences are still linked to cultural differences in these later works, but those differences are often negotiated within rather than between cultures and spaces, just as they are in Mahfouz’ *Cairo Trilogy*. The conflicts are also frequently mapped onto generational misunderstandings: between immigrants seen clinging to their home culture and their children, who were born and raised in England; or between immigrants seduced by Western culture and a second generation seeking to reestablish contact with the culture of their parents’ homeland or with identities founded on extremism (e.g., Kureishi’s “My Son the Fanatic” or the KEVIN faction of extremist Muslims in Smith’s *White Teeth* [390]).

This is not even to mention the formal shifts at work in the magical realism of Rushdie and in Smith’s foregrounded fascination with the interconnectedness of the various plots in *White Teeth*, which finally converge at the climactic ending: “And all these people are heading for the same room,” the narrator declares (428). This sort of interconnectedness, this confluence of differences in a major city, was prime material for Balzac’s fiction, a source of deep concern for Trollope’s sense of tradition, and a sign for Fontane that the earth was shrinking steadily. What is new and thus a formal challenge for Trollope, though, is cultivated and handled authoritatively by Smith’s narrator. Because it is no longer new, such connectedness has to be foregrounded as exceptional rather than banal, the small world once again made into a source of possibility rather than pessimism.

The epistemological and cultural conflicts also take the shape of an internal struggle within the development of one character, as they do in Peter Høeg’s *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne (Smilla’s Sense of Snow)* [US] or *Miss Smilla’s Feeling for Snow* [UK], 1992). Høeg’s novel matches some of the narrative strategies of nineteenth-century realism with the complication of them by a bi-cultural first-person narrator who is torn between the fierce independence of her mother (a native of Greenland), and the Danish ration-

4. Consider the number of major European novelists who either were born outside of Europe (Rudyard Kipling, George Orwell, Doris Lessing, Albert Camus, Marguerite Duras, Lawrence Durrell, J.G. Ballard, William Boyd) or who, born in Europe, either emigrated or spent significant time abroad (Knut Hamsun, Hermann Hesse, James Joyce, Thomas Mann, Samuel Beckett, Karen Blixen, Graham Greene, Anthony Burgess).

5. Magical realism itself is constituted by colliding epistemologies, as numerous critics have pointed out. See especially Faris.
ality of her father (a surgeon). Smilla Jaspersen is self-consciously poised between the nineteenth-century roots of the detective novel and a more introspective modernist search for identity. She is also very explicitly made the center of a war between the scientific epistemology of rational Europe and the mythical epistemology of Greenland. At the burial of a murdered young Greenlander named Isaiah (Esajas), the novel’s first paragraphs evoke a stable, realist sense of a particular setting, from the precise temperature (“0° Fahrenheit”) to the time of year (“December”), to the location: Vestre Cemetery, Copenhagen (11). Yet Smilla simultaneously ushers in the idea of unstable cultural identity that will permeate the book; stating that, “in the language that is no longer mine, the snow is qanik” (a Greenlandic word for the type of snow she is describing), she goes on to distinguish “outsider[s]” from those who have “grown up in Greenland” (12). Difference is constructed here immediately in terms of language and space, but it quickly expands to include competing interpretations of natural phenomena, from the explanatory science of the hexagonal shape of ice crystals to an explanatory myth that “the heavens are weeping for Isaiah, and the tears are turning into frosty down that is covering him up” (12). Like the novels of Balzac, Trollope and Fontane discussed above, Høeg’s is set into motion by the presence of Isaiah, a colonial character in a post-imperial European metropolis. Smilla’s presence, too, is key to the maintenance of tension between spaces, cultures, languages, and types of knowledge. Her narration repeatedly refers to the Danish imperial project in Greenland, which she sees as motivated simultaneously by commercial and scientific concerns.

The novel structures itself, and its understanding of the competing Arctic and European epistemologies, in terms of absolute spatial divisions that are also narrative divisions, sections of the book: the City (Byen), the in-between zone of the Sea (Havet) and the othered zone of the Ice (Isen). These divisions are then repeatedly troubled. The relationship is clearly hierarchical and indicative of a slow attrition: the first section of the novel, “The City,” consists of three parts, “The Sea” then of two, and “The Ice,” finally, of just one. There are also correspondingly different units of time-measurement, as Smilla explains the gap between absolute, measured European time, and North Greenland’s more relative idea of the sinik, “the number of overnights that a journey requires”: “Sinik is not a distance, not a number of days or hours. It is both a spatial and a temporal phenomenon... that is taken for granted [selvfølgelig] by Inuits but that cannot be captured by

6. Stoungbjerg, who urges the novel’s depiction of space towards a compelling reading of Høeg as critic of the “instrumental logic” inherent in the project of “the domination of nature” (388), claims that “culture, the subject and western reason meet their limit” in the novel (389), but the novel’s ending suggests a more durable tension. On imperialism more generally in the novel, see Poddar and Mealor.
ordinary speech in any European language” (299). The novel straddles the line between Smilla’s “feeling” for ice and snow—which, she claims, “is incomprehensible [uforståelig] to those who were not born to it”—and the empirical data-collection endemic to the detective project (398). The ending bluntly defies the closure one associates with detection, though. As the scientist/imperialist Tørk takes off on foot into the Arctic cold, Smilla tells us in the novel’s last words that “There will be no resolution [afgørelse]” (435). The final word, *afgørelse*, has legal connotations of “verdict” or “settlement” that speak directly to Høeg’s frustration of the detective project. The narratological implications are no less important, and the many oppositions on which the novel is based will remain undecided. Høeg’s novel combines a realist mode of external observation and description, complete with a deep respect for the function of the archive; a self-consciously irresolvable ending; and a first-person interiority that moves fluidly between memory and present, between waking and dreaming, and between emotion and enumeration. In this sense, *Smilla’s Sense of Snow* offers us an instructive view of how the theme of the central foreigner negotiates several major narrative trends since Balzac. This is at least one compelling version of what happens in the late twentieth century when a (partially) colonial figure is imported into a metropolitan novel whose aims and claims are (partially) realist ones.


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